3.5.6 Raft River Fire Protection District

This is the easternmost FPD and covers a total of 349,911 acres including 154,811 acres of BLM land, 187,314 acres of private land, 7,638 acres of State land, and 147 acres of U.S. Forest Service land (Table 6). Discussions are underway to consider expanding this District to the north and east within the next couple of years, depending on landowner cooperation. Much of the FPD is experiencing juniper encroachment and an average of 20 fires in this fuel type has occurred annually (Figures 14 and 15). Since 1975 there have been 20 interagency wildfires resulting in a total of 23,600 acres burned. The FPD has been slow to develop and most of the subdivisions approved are adjacent to Malta. Parcel development has been a little more widespread resulting in additions to Elba, Elba Basin, Connor, Sublette and lower Heglar Creek.

The use of center pivot irrigation systems are present in this FPD as in all the other districts, but seems to be heaviest in the east part of the district. In the southern part of the district some of the drilled wells are producing heated water resulting in the development of the Raft River Geothermal Project.

Major portions of the Raft River bottomlands are used for grazing and covered by a mixture of grass and shrubs; slopes are mostly covered by juniper stands with an understory of grass or a mixture of grass and various shrub species. These dry sites are easily ignited during dry periods and carry fire well, normally resulting in extremely hot fires with high rates of spread.

R&S Enterprise (2002) prepared a Mitigation Assessment for Malta in 2002, which is covered by the Raft River FPD. This Mitigation Assessment identified the Fire Department infrastructure including: personnel, training, equipment, and facility. In addition, the assessment included a hazardous fuels reduction program, costs, and maps identifying the need to install 224 acres of buffer strips, up to 2500 feet wide, within the city of Malta. The program would reduce the wildfire potential a catastrophic wildfire, decrease the fire department response time, and reduce the wildfire potential for an estimated 69 private homes throughout the area. Section 4.0 of this document lists specific mitigations and associated costs for the Raft River FPD.

Figure 14. Sagebrush-grassland/juniper fuels along the Elba-Almo Road.

Figure 15. Burn area west of Connor along the Elba-Almo Road.

Fire, Structural, and Community Assessments for Raft River FPD

The following is a summary of the Fire Hazard Assessment for Raft River FPD. Table 22. shows the complete results. Overall, the single subdivision in this FPD received a Class A (low) fire hazard assessment rating for 2 out of 6 elements (33%) and a Class B (medium) rating for 4 out of 6 elements (67%).

Vegetation Type – Sagebrush-grassland is the primary carrier of any ignition to the wildland-urban interface.
Slope – Most slopes within the assessment area are less than 10%.
Aspect – The majority of the structures within the assessment area face east.
Elevation – The elevation within the assessment area averages is between 3500-5500 feet.
Fuel Type – The fuel types within the assessment area is medium fuels (brush, medium shrubs, and small trees.
Fuel Density – The fuel density within the assessment area is a non-continuous fuel bed. Grass and/or sparse fuels adjacent to federal land are less than 30% cover.
Fuel Bed Depth – The majority fuel bed depth with the assessment area is 1-3 feet.

Table 22. Fire Hazard Assessment for Raft River FPD

Subdivision/Parcels	Vegetation Type	Rating Elements					
		Slope	Aspect	Elevation	Fuel Type	Fuel Density	Fuel Bed Depth
Raft River**	Sagebrush/grass	A	B	B	B	A	B

A=Class A low fire hazard assessment rating
B=Class B medium fire hazard assessment rating
C=Class C high fire hazard assessment rating
** Not close to Federal lands

The following is a summary of the Structural Hazard Assessment for Raft River FPD. Table 23 shows the complete results. Overall, the subdivision received a Class A (low) fire hazard assessment rating for 2 out of 7 elements (29%), a Class B (medium) 4 out of 7 elements (57%) and a Class C (high) 1 out of 7 elements (14%).

Structure Density – The structure density within the assessment area is at least one structure per 0-5 acres.
Proximity to Fuels – Structures within the assessment area and adjacent to the wildland-urban interface are less than 40 feet to flammable fuels.

Building Materials – Ten to 50% of the structures have fire resistant roofs and/or siding.
Survivable Space – Ten to 50% of the structures have improved survivable space around property.
Roads – Roads within the assessment area are maintained, with some narrow, two –lane roads with no shoulders.
Response Time – Response time is 20 minutes or less to the assessment area.
Access – Multiple entrances and exits well equipped for fire trucks with turnarounds.

Table 23. Structural Hazard Assessment for Raft River FPD

Subdivision/Parcels	Rating Elements						
	Structure Density	Proximity of Fuels	Building Materials	Survivable Space	Roads	Response Time	Access
Raft River**	A	C	B	B	B	A	B

A=Class A low fire hazard assessment rating
B=Class B medium fire hazard assessment rating
C=Class C high fire hazard assessment rating
** Not close to Federal lands

Table 24 summarizes the Community Assessment for the Raft River FPD.

Table 24. Community Assessment Summary for Raft River FPD

Rating Element	Class A	Class B	Class C	Rating (A, B, or C)
Community Description	There is a clear line where residential business, and public structures meet wildland fuels. Wildland fuels do not generally continue into the developed area.	There is no clear line of demarcation; wildland fuels are continuous outside of and within the developed area.	The community generally exists where homes, ranches, and other structures are scattered but adjacent to wildland vegetation.	A
Response Time	Prompt response time to interface areas (20 min or less).	Moderate response time to interface area (20-40 minutes).	Lengthy response time to interface area (40+ minutes).	A
Firefighting Capability	Adequate structural fire department. Sufficient personnel, equipment, and wildland firefighting capability and experience.	Inadequate fire department. Limited personnel, and or equipment but with some wildland firefighting experience and training.	Fire department non-existent or untrained and/or equipped to fight wildland fire.	B

Water Supply	Adequate supply of fire hydrants and pressure, and/or open water sources (pools, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, etc.).	Inadequate supply of fire hydrants, or limited pressure. Limited water supply.	No pressure water system available near interface. No surface water available.	C
Local Emergency Operations Group (EOG)	Active EOG. Evacuation plan in place.	Limited participation in EOG. Have some form of evacuation process.	No EOG. No evacuation plan in place.	C
Structure Density	At least one structure per 0-5 acres.	On structure per 5-10 acres.	Less than one structure per 10 acres.	A
Community Planning Practices	County/local laws and zoning ordinances require use of fire safe residential design and adequate ingress/egress of fire suppression resources. Fire Department actively participates in planning process.	Local officials have an understanding of appropriate community planning practices for wildfire loss mitigation. Fire department has limited input to fire safe development and planning efforts.	Community standards for fire safe development and protection are marginal or non-existent. Little or no effort has been made in assessing and applying measures to reduce wildfire impact.	B
Fire Mitigation Ordinances, Laws, or Regulations in Place	Have adopted local ordinances or codes requiring fire safe land-scaping, building and planning. Fire Department actively participates in planning process.	Have voluntary ordinances or codes requiring fire safe landscaping and building practices. Fire Department practices in planning process.	No local codes, laws or ordinances requiring fire safe building landscaping or planning processes.	B
Fire Department Equipment	Good supply of structure and wildland fire apparatus and miscellaneous specialty equipment.	Smaller supply of fire apparatus in fairly good repair with some specialty equipment.	Minimum amount of fire apparatus, which is old and in need of repair. None or little specialty equipment.	B
Fire Department Training and Experience	Large, fully paid fire department with personnel that meet NFPA or NWCG training requirements, are experienced in wildland fire, and have adequate equipment.	Mixed fire department. Some paid and some volunteer personnel. Limited experience, training and equipment to fight wildland fire.	Small, all volunteer fire department. Limited training, experience and budget with regular turnover of personnel. Do not meet NFPA or NWCG standards.	C
Community Fire Safe Efforts and programs already in place	Organized and active groups (Fire Dept.) providing educational materials and programs for their community.	Limited interest and participation in educational programs. Fire Department does some prevention and public education.	No interest of participation in educational programs. No prevention/education efforts by fire department.	A
Community support and attitudes	Actively supports urban interface plans and actions.	Some participation in urban interface plans and actions.	Opposes urban interface plans and efforts.	A